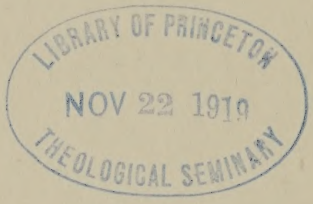
CHRIST AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE

FRANCIS E. CLARK



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By

Francis E. Clark, D.D.

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Christ and the Young People

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By
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"Old Homes of New Americans," etc.

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Preface

A MULTITUDE of Lives of Christ have been published and a multitude more of books for the young and about the young. I do not know, however, of a book that looks at the life of our Lord from the standpoint of the young people, and at the same time at young people from the standpoint of the gospel narrative of Jesus.

This is what this book, however imperfectly, seeks to do.

Instead of going first to the Scripture to find what Christ did or said that would appeal to young people, as perhaps ordinarily would be most natural, I first studied with this book in mind the character and ideals, the leanings and longings of the healthy, natural, unspoiled young people I had known.

Then I searched the Gospel diligently to see how our Saviour's life exemplified these ideals and natural characteristics.

There is a danger that one will, half unconsciously, make the text fit the characteristics, but, keeping this danger in mind, and trying to avoid it, I have been surprised (though why

should I be?) that in every case the ideals of youth, which, as a rule, are the purest and best of any period of life, are exemplified in the earthly life and teachings of our Lord.

Most young people and many teachers of the young, perhaps, have been as slow as myself in making this discovery. To such I trust this little book will prove that the best in us all is but a reflection of the Master's life, and that therefore it is no impossible aspiration to be "like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

FRANCIS EDWARD CLARK.

Boston, Mass.

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I

Christ and the Young People

CHRIST, our Lord and Master, appeals to all classes and conditions of men. That He does so is one sign of His divinity. It is only the God-man who has a special message for every age and type of mankind.

We read of "a man's man," and "a ladies' man," and of a "young man's man."

Some people have natural aptitudes to reach one class and some another. Some have a special message for the cultured; others, for the ignorant and unlettered. Some have a gift for reaching the hearts of children; others have words of peculiar comfort for the aged or the suffering. It is the unique distinction of Jesus Christ that He has a message for every one. The young and the old, the fisherman, the publican, the scribe, the rich young man, the blind beggar, Mary and Martha, and the woman taken in adultery, all alike heard Him and heard Him gladly.

Yet, while this is all true, He makes a special and peculiar appeal to young people. He never lived to be an old man; He never even reached

middle life. Though "He knew what was in man" (all men), He knew by personal, earthly experience, as well as by His supernatural wisdom, the joys, the restraints, the temptations, the triumphs, of the young.

He grew up from babyhood to boyhood, from boyhood to young manhood, from young manhood to the fullness of His adult powers. He worked in His father's shop as boys do to-day. He doubtless went with His mother to the fountain of Nazareth as soon as He could walk, as we see little boys toddling by their mother's side to the same fountain to-day.

As a lad of twelve the wondrous meaning of His life burst upon Him in His "Father's house," as such glimpses often come to adolescents to-day. In the long, silent years in Nazareth He knew the struggles, the hopes, and aspirations, doubtless the perplexities, of youth.

And when He began His public ministry, in the full lusty vigour of young manhood, there came doubtless the sense of power, the natural desire for achievement, quite apart from His supernatural gifts, which come to all earnest, full-blooded young people.

Perhaps this sense of kinship is one reason why young people flock to Him. The age of conversion, it is well known, is from twelve to twenty. Few, comparatively, after that age, become Christ's disciples; but multitudes be-

tween those age limits ask the question of the young man of old, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

It is my aim in this chapter and those that follow it to try to interpret Jesus Christ to the young people, or rather to interpret them to themselves; to dwell upon some of the qualities in their Lord and Saviour which, half unconsciously, perhaps, have attracted them; and to show them how natural, reasonable, yes, how necessary, to any normal young person, is this attraction of Christ, so that they may find a basis in their own natures for yielding to Him their love and obedience.

As inevitable is it that the young should be attracted to Christ as that the magnet should draw the iron, as that the needle should point to the pole. It is only the perverted, blunted, or preoccupied nature that in youth can resist this attraction. Let me repeat the thought.

To become a Christian is no unusual, abnormal development. It is as natural as for a flower to open under the genial rays of the April sun, or for a bird to sing at mating-time.

It would be a tremendous gain if this truth were fully understood: that it is the natural, normal, to-be-expected development that a young person should become a Christian before he is (we will say) eighteen years of age.

In many quarters conversion is too often

looked upon as a sporadic, if not spasmodic, departure from the ordinary state of affairs. If a revivalist comes to town, if a Billy Sunday moves a city to its depths, young people are expected to flock to the front and profess conversion.

On the other hand, I believe that parents, Sunday-school teachers, pastors, should expect those for whom they are responsible to become Christ's willing and avowed followers before they reach the legal age of manhood. It should be considered a strange, abnormal, almost an inexplicable, thing if a boy or girl should grow up in our Christian families, in our Sunday-schools, within sound of our church bells, and not become a Christian. This does not do away with the idea of conversion, or substitute confirmation for regeneration; but it does show that there is a harvest-time in the spiritual realm, and that harvest-time is not at the end of the season, when the grain is matured, and, like a shock of corn fully ripe, man is waiting to be gathered to his fathers, but that it is nearer the other end of life, when the generous, alert young soul is eager to ask the question, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" and, when he hears the Master speak, to say, "Here, Lord, am I; send me."

The conversion in middle and later life is also, of course, to be longed for and worked for; and, when it comes, it is apt to be marked, dramatic, perhaps sensational, as were Paul's and Jerry

McAuley's; but where there is one Paul, there are a score of Timothys; where there is one Jerry McAuley, there are a hundred who may scarce remember the time when they were not Christians.

The enormous advantage which would result if early conversion were the natural, expected, taken-for-granted experience is readily seen.

At present in some circles a youthful Christian is unfortunately looked upon as an anomaly, a little too good for this workaday world. To "sow wild oats" is considered the natural occupation of a youth; or at least he is expected to be frivolous, thoughtless, and unmoved by spiritual realities.

Because of this mistaken view some churches make the terrible mistake of attempting to amuse young people instead of touching the deepest springs in their natures, and giving them something to do for Christ because they are normally His, and naturally want to serve Him.

On that account purely social entertainment, or, at the best, educational organizations have multiplied in some of our churches, and the thoughts of our boys and girls are sometimes taken up almost exclusively with secular activities, secret passwords and dramatic plays and outdoor sports, to the elimination, very largely, of the personal claims of Christ and His service.

This is lamentably shown in some of our colleges and secondary schools, when an earnest,

outspoken Christian is looked upon as a freak or a crank, who would, for instance, be kept out of many college fraternities unless, perchance, he happened to distinguish himself on the football gridiron or the baseball diamond.

May this modest volume show how the life of Christ and His teachings appeal especially to the young ; how natural, almost inevitable, it is for a young person to be drawn to Christ and to accept Him as Pattern and Guide when He is winsomely presented; how peculiarly unnatural, almost abhorrent is the rejection by the young of the Saviour of the world. Through it may some hear the call " Come unto Me."

II

His Naturalness

A QUALITY of the Master's character not often dwelt upon is His absolute *naturalness*. And this is a quality which, if understood, would peculiarly endear Him to the young. For there are none more quick to detect false assumptions, or to resent unnatural poses, than young people.

The conceited youth soon becomes the butt of his companions. The young men who put on "side," the young women who are artificial in their manners and attitudes, are soon detected by their companions, and are either shunned or ridiculed. College hazing has its roots in this resentment, and the *poseur* and the self-conceited are those who suffer most.

Older people are much more apt to be deceived by superior assumptions than the young.

I know a young man who seeks to conceal an overweening conceit by a thin veneer of modesty, and, while always boasting of his own exploits and attainments, constantly affirms that he "does not know how it happens"; it is "just his luck," he supposes, that he succeeds quite so well.

He has quite befooled many of his elders, who say, "What a wonderful boy! and how modest!" while companions of his own age, appraising him at his real value and not at his own estimate of himself, laugh at his pretensions.

This unconscious insight into realities, characteristic of an unspoiled youth, should and does lead him to see in Christ the most natural of boys and men. Our Lord's early life,—how absolutely natural it was! The childhood miracles are all in the Apocrypha, not in the Gospels.

He apparently lived the life of any simple, pure Jewish boy, learning the beautiful Bible texts, trained in the charming family life of a devoutly religious father and mother, taught by the rabbi in the village school when He was old enough, running on errands for His parents, working in His father's shop.

To be sure, when He was twelve years old, and like all Jewish boys at that age, He went up with His parents to the temple in Jerusalem, He seems to have had a vision of His life-mission, of the work of His heavenly Father when worshipping in that Father's house.

But it is the only event of His childhood that even borders on the unusual, and after that brief, beautiful scene in the temple He went back to the humble home and humble work in Nazareth, and for long, long years was "subject" to Joseph and Mary.

In His active ministry to attest His divine mission He did many "wonderful works"; but, if we admit His deity, none of them were unnatural for a God-man to perform, none were unnecessary to His mission.

Consider for a moment how He gathered His immediate disciples. He simply called them to Him. He did not dazzle them, as a Napoleon would have done, by winning marvellous victories. He did not promise them unlimited loot in this world and unlimited sensual delights in the world to come as Mohammed did. He did not bewilder them with His rhetoric and logic as some philosophers have done. He simply said to the fishermen, Peter and James and John, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men;" and to Matthew the tax-gatherer, "Come," and to Zacchæus the publican, "To-day I must abide at thy house."

While Christ had a compelling power with men, it was a natural compulsion that did not depend upon His clothes or pose, or assumption of supernatural power.

He did not perform a miracle to induce any one of His twelve apostles to follow Him. Paul seems to have been impressed not by His raising the dead, or feeding the hungry multitudes, but by His teachings, His spirit, and His life.

In all St. Paul's epistles there are few allusions to Christ's supernatural works, but pages and

pages are given to explanations of His teachings, and to exhortations to follow in His steps and to have "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

How a mountebank like Dowie swelled and puffed himself out, and donned imposing robes when he tried to impress his dupes with his prophetic pretensions! But it would be revolting to think of our Lord's attitudinizing or posing for effect.

His miracles were all performed in the simplest and most natural way. He had but to speak the word, and the healing was wrought, or the loaves were multiplied.

In fact, in every possible way He seems to have avoided publicity and display.

He healed the nobleman's son while far away from him. "Go thy way; thy son liveth."

He put all the weeping, howling mourners, perhaps mourners hired to wail according to the Eastern custom, out of the room before He said, "Talitha cumi," "Maid, arise."

In His supreme miracle, the raising of Lazarus, He simply said, "Lazarus, come forth:" and he that was dead came forth from the tomb where he had lain four days.

After His death and resurrection our Lord was as natural, familiar, and unconstrained in His actions as He had been before.

On the way to Emmaus His most intimate friends did not know Him, so much like any

foot-traveller did He seem; and, when the disciples saw Him on the shore of the lake, He had a simple meal of broiled fish for them, and bade them come and breakfast after their night on the lake, as any considerate friend might do.

I need not multiply illustrations of this sort. Christ was the most natural man who ever lived, because He was the most real man. His deity did not make Him less, but more, human. He did not need to put on anything, because everything good and beautiful was in Him and He had only to let it shine forth.

This is one source of His supreme attractiveness, especially to unspoiled young people; and we can measure the genuineness of our own characters by the strength of the appeal Christ makes to us.

If, my friend, you are simple, sincere, genuine, and true, read again the life of Christ, and see how ready a response these qualities in Him find in you when you are at your best, and how quickly your heart will say, "Lord, I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest."

III

His Approachability

YOUNG people are inclined to stand in awe of great men, and with good reason. There is something lacking in the nature of any young person who can approach a man in high station or of peculiar renown without a little trepidation. Such a one is either lacking in reverence, or is so egotistic as to put himself on a level with the greatest and best.

One of our most eminent writers has confessed to his nervousness when he first rang Longfellow's door-bell, and when he was first introduced to Emerson, though both were among the most approachable of men, and their caller was himself a man of literary genius.

In trying to make friends for the Christian Endeavour cause, it has been my fortune (I may be pardoned for saying this) to meet several kings and presidents of republics, and others of equal eminence, and I will confess that it was somewhat difficult at first to subdue a certain nervousness and apprehension, simply because of the ceremony and state "which doth hedge a king."

It is not always an easy thing, in the first place, to obtain an audience with such a ruler. You must make a special appointment through an ambassador, or some important intermediary. There is sometimes much official red tape which takes days or perhaps weeks to untangle. The court prescribes the clothes you must wear. It will not do to wear a business suit and a slouch hat, but the king's chamberlain or some authority will prescribe the cut of your coat, the colour of your gloves and necktie, and the style of your hat, and the king or emperor will receive you in uniform to show that it is a state ceremony and not a social call that he grants.

When you come into his presence you must bow low, and when you depart you must back out from his august presence, so as never to turn your back upon a king. If it is the Emperor of Japan, for instance, who grants the audience, you must bow three times before coming near him, and you must always allow the monarchical ruler to lead the conversation, to speak the first word, and to indicate when the audience is over.

What a contrast this to the way men approached the King of kings when He was upon the earth. No court clothes, no long and tedious preliminaries, no waiting in ante-chambers until it is His pleasure to see you! We get the impression from the gospel narrative that Jesus was the most approachable of men. He would

not allow Himself to be guarded from intrusion. His disciples sometimes seemed to try to stand between Him and the people, but He would not allow it. "Send the multitudes away that they may buy bread," they said, but He would not allow it, but miraculously fed the hungry crowd.

When the eager mothers brought to Him their "babes," as the revised version has it, "that His garments might touch them," His disciples rebuked the parents, and then our Lord uttered that classic phrase which forever endeared Him to the motherhood and the childhood of the world: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, for to such belongeth the Kingdom of God."

I presume that these parents were poor people, for they did not send their babes in the arms of hired nurses; they brought them. Very likely the children were just such ragged, dirty little specimens of humanity as we see to-day in every village of Palestine. But they were not too ragged or dirty for the World's Redeemer to take up in His arms and bless.

Our Lord seems to have dined with any one who asked Him. It is for an earthly king to invite, not to accept invitations. The Heavenly King went wherever He was invited, to the house of Zacchæus, to Simon's formal board, to the homes of publicans and sinners. He even got the name of being a winebibber and a glut-

ton, because He was so little particular with whom He associated. So pure and spotless were His robes that they could not be stained with earthly soil. He was not known, as are most of us, by the company He kept. His motto seems to have been: "The man who wants to see me is the man I want to see."

Perhaps the supreme example of His approachability is His interview with the woman of Samaria. I never fully realized the beauty and the naturalness of this story until when travelling in Samaria I could seem to sit on Jacob's well and hear His gracious, kindly words. Even now I cannot realize the gulf that separated those two actors in that human-divine drama, that drama of approachability. I was about to write "condescension," but that is too cheap a word to express it. Christ knew how to bridge that tremendous gulf between Himself and the woman, with a word, a look.

He had not come in purple state, but as a foot traveller, wearied by His long journey, He sat on the well-curb, His humble throne. And here comes a woman, from perhaps the neighbouring city on the hillside, now called Nablous. Think of the contrast! She was a woman; He was a man. It was contrary to all the customs, it would have been thought to indicate questionable morality, for a man to talk thus freely with a strange woman. She was a Samaritan; He a

Jew,—another barrier to their intercourse, and a formidable one. We can scarcely imagine the great mountain-wall fixed between the two, by those antagonistic words,—Jew, Samaritan. She was a bad woman, in the estimation of her neighbours and the world, a woman living with a man not her husband. He was the only absolutely pure man who has ever walked this earth.

Yet He did not hesitate to speak first and to ask a favour of her. "Give me to drink." A King confers favours. He does not beg for them. Then the conversation drifts on as naturally as though two equals were talking together. Read the story again to the very last word, which tells us how Jesus led her on so naturally, so inevitably, to tell the story of her life, and to hear from Him the great announcement. "I that speak unto thee am He,"—the Messiah, the Christ, the Desire of all nations, the One whom prophets foretold, of whom the Psalmist sang.

Many other instances in our Lord's life might be related to show how easy it was to approach Him. Nothing of the cold, haughty, or cynical. Nothing of the *grande monarch* air. Nothing that would freeze or chill the most timid mortal.

Young people, is it not such a one you would like for your friend? Then remember He is no different to-day. He alone is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. What He was, He is.

Try Him and see. If you can say nothing else, say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And, like the one who came to Him of old with those words, you will receive your heart's desire, and will come in time to know that He in whom you believe is as near to you and as easy of approach as when He healed the afflicted son of the believing father, or talked with the woman of many husbands, at the well-curb of Samaria.

IV

His Modesty

A VIRTUE near akin to naturalness is modesty. The conceited man is never natural. He is always thinking of himself, always posing, always saying to himself, "What will others think of me?" The hearts of all people, but especially of the young, instinctively go out to the genuinely modest man. He draws one to him without being conscious of any attractive power, simply because he does not think "more highly of himself than he ought to think."

What a temptation it would have been to any other man than Christ to use his supernatural powers, to make a theatrical display, to show off, to impress his day and generation with his unique ability!

That was the essence of at least one of the temptations in the wilderness, when the devil urged Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle. How men would have stared to see one fall from such a height and receive no hurt! He would be the town talk. He would be set on a pinnacle of notoriety higher than the

temple; but Jesus would not perform a miracle for His own glory, or to attract attention to Himself.

Over and over again such a temptation must have come to one with such powers, but every time He was able to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

He was modest in His manner of living. Immodesty is not always shown in words. Extravagance is one form of immodesty. He who lives beyond his income for the sake of making a sensation is essentially immodest. The woman who incrusts her fingers with diamonds, and wears jewels worth a king's ransom for the sake of display, is immodest.

Even one "who can afford it," as we say, though no one can afford to be extravagant, can show an immodest spirit by reckless, ostentatious living.

How was it with the One who had the gold and silver of the world at His disposal, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?

We have His own pathetic description of His poverty. It has become a classic in all languages. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Now, poverty in itself considered is neither modest nor immodest. A braggart and a boaster may be as poor as Job's proverbial turkey or

the mouse that is supposed to live in a church; but, when one has riches unbounded, and for the sake of humanity chooses to live the life of a servant, that is modesty indeed.

Again, recall all the words that Christ ever spoke. Have even His critics dared to call Him an immodest boaster? Not one so far as I am aware, and He has had critics many and drastic. How strange this is, since He claimed to be the Son of God, since He even dared to say, "I and my Father are one;" since He declared to all mankind, "I am the way, the truth and the life": "No man cometh unto the Father but by me!" How He seems to lay Himself open to the criticism of being a braggart! and yet you cannot find an infidel who will dare to make this charge. Why and how these assumptions accord with His reputation during all these centuries for modesty, humility, and self-abnegation, we will consider later; but the very fact that the most astounding assumptions and the most absolute humility of speech and action are united in Him should give us many moments of serious and profound consideration and lead us by a very direct road to acknowledge His divinity and His deity.

But at present let us consider other proofs of His wonderful modesty. A modest man is known by the company he keeps, and Christ usually consorted with humble men of lowly

station. He might have been the guest of princes and kings. Pilate would have delighted to entertain such a miracle-worker. But He preferred fishermen and tax-gatherers, and did not hesitate to turn away the rich young ruler who could not come up to His standard of self-sacrifice.

He preferred the friends He made, not because they were poor and in a lowly station, but because they were "meek and lowly in *heart*," in other words, humble and modest, and not self-important and self-sufficient.

And then think of that wonderful occasion when He girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet! Not so much was this done to set us a literal example as to exemplify the spirit of modest humility, which is willing to render the most menial service to another, and consider it no disgrace or lowering of dignity.

Now, such modesty and humility, combined with a courage and dignity that never lowered His standard or denied His destiny, is just the quality which appeals to every genuine, unspoiled young person. None, as I have before said, resent fake assumption more. In the homely language of the street a young man said to me the other day, "I don't like that minister, and I will not go to hear him preach, he is so stuck on himself."

He may have misjudged that preacher, but his words indicate that natural resentment of the young against conceited mannerisms.

In Christ our Lord, the preacher of preachers, he will never find a suspicion of lordly assumption. His sermons were parables. He drove the truth home with a familiar story.

Though He was Lord of all, He was also a "friend of publicans and sinners." However young, insignificant, and unnoticed by men we feel ourselves to be, we are not unnoticed by Him; and if ours is a true modesty, a humility of the spirit, we have begun to learn of Him and to become like Him.

V

His Courage

THERE are two kinds of courage, as commonly supposed, moral and physical. If there are, Christ our Lord had both. If He had not been physically as well as morally brave He could not make the appeal that He does to young people, for no young man or woman would take a coward for a model.

Yet so persistently is our Master represented as the "meek and lowly Jesus," the "humble Nazarene," the Preacher of non-resistance, the One who allowed Himself to be captured, tried, condemned and crucified without a struggle, and without allowing His hot-blooded disciples to fight, that many people unconsciously absorb the idea that, however brave Jesus may have been, we have little indication of it in the Bible story.

The fact is, there is really but one kind of courage, and that is moral courage which manifests itself in various ways.

The courage of the bully is only tyranny of the weak, and the bully is usually a physical coward when he meets his match. The courage of the

prize-fighter is mere callousness mingled with desire for the gate receipts. Even the courage of the soldier may be cowardice that is more afraid of the sneers of his comrades than of powder and bullets.

Real courage is willingness to suffer for a great cause, and it is just as possible for the weakest girl as for the mail-clad warrior. If this is true, then Christ our Lord is the supreme example of courage, physical and moral, for they are really one.

Let me prove it by the record. He found the temple profaned by the money changers and the hucksters. It was the ordinary, accustomed thing to profane it with selfish, commercial transactions. It was justified, doubtless, by the plea that it was necessary to sell doves and lambs for sacrifice within the temple precincts, and to exchange ordinary money for the coins of the temple: just as now, at the doors of European cathedrals, incense, charms, rosaries, pictures of the Virgin Mary, etc., are sold.

But our Lord saw that the temple worship was becoming commercialized, that men were there for what they could get out of it, not selling for the convenience of the worshippers. They were making His Father's house a den of thieves. Now notice what He did. He was one, unprotected, unarmed man. Not only the traffickers but the worshippers were all against Him. He

was opposing not only the money-makers but the traditions and customs of the place and the convenience of the populace.

But His courage was equal to the occasion. He was one man against the multitude with His scourge of small cords, a symbol of punishment and cleansing rather than an effective instrument. He drove them all out, and cleansed, with one majestic burst of righteous indignation, the temple precincts. It was not the whip of small cords, it was His moral and physical courage that made the selfish hucksters flee. There was never a more splendid manifestation of true valour.

Think once more of a scene that took place at the very end of His life. He had been betrayed and He knew it. The soldiers had come to apprehend Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. His disciples, inspired for the moment with their Master's courage, were ready to fight: at least, Peter was, and he actually drew his sword. The only chance of escape was in fighting or flight. A coward would have taken the chance, for Jesus knew that He would be condemned and executed if He was arrested. He was brave enough to renounce His only opportunity to flee, and said to Peter, " Put up again thy sword into its place."

Oh, I think there is nothing more sublimely courageous in all the annals of blood-stained his-

tory than the simple account that John gives of the apprehension of Jesus in the Garden.

"Jesus therefore, *knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth* and said unto them (the soldiers), 'Whom seek ye?' They answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus saith unto them, 'I am he.'"

Generous consideration of others must always be an element of true courage. Read another verse and we see generosity and valour mingled as never before. The soldiers astonished, even frightened, at His simple avowal and His godlike mien, "went back and fell to the ground." They were the cowards, Christ was the hero. He even had to ask them again, "Whom seek ye?" And again He had to say, "I told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

O young men! was absolute, unflinching courage, mingled with tender consideration, ever before displayed so wonderfully? For a mere man who could not read the future, with a chance and expectation of acquittal, such surrender of Himself and clearing of His companions would be almost beyond precedent, but Jesus knew "all things that were coming upon Him," the buffetings, the scourgings, the spitting, the purple robe, the cross, the thirst, the death agony, and yet He calmly said: "I am he . . . let these go their way."

And this supreme courage never failed Him.

He did not call for the twelve legions of angels whom He might have had. He did not pray that the cup of agony might pass from Him unless it was the Father's will. He confronted Pilate with undaunted brow, and when the ruler, irritated by the calm refusal of Jesus to plead His cause and defend Himself, said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee," Jesus answered, "Thou wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above."

Calm, dignified, supremely courageous to the very end,—no soldiers could scare Him: no ruler could daunt Him: no adverse circumstances could shake His courage: no slings and darts of outrageous fortune could unnerve Him. I might relate a score of instances to prove the courage of Jesus Christ, but I will content myself with one supremely courageous assertion of His, oft repeated in various forms, throughout all His active life.

That is His assertion that He was the unique Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. He called Himself the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Good Shepherd, the Door into the Sheepfold. He declared that He and the Father were one: that no one could come to the Father but by Him. He exhausted the language of simile to declare His supreme aims.

How does this prove His courage? Consider

what the world, His world, thought Him to be. A peasant's son. A carpenter by trade, a poor, lowly man of humble family. Even a Napoleon would not have had the courage to make such claims. A Julius Cæsar or Alexander the Great, though allowing themselves to be worshipped as gods, would have shrunk from making the demand of universal adoration and leadership that Jesus made.

These are the claims either of the world's most colossal egoist, or the crazy imaginings of a lunatic, or they are the true demands of the most courageous of mankind. The Christian world has always rejected the first two of these hypotheses: the nineteen centuries of Christianity disproves them as well. Every ingenuous young person is revolted by them. The last supposition alone has stood the test of the ages. Jesus Christ is the supreme human example of Godlike courage. He was what He claimed to be. He dared to make the claim. He was the Son of God.

VI

His Considerateness

THERE is one quality in a friend which is indispensable. He may be natural, modest, brave, witty and wise, but if he lacks a genuine heart of love, or is inconsiderate of our feelings, we cannot grapple him to our hearts. We may admire him, respect him, honour and applaud him, but we do not want him for a friend.

I know some most excellent men who always make me shiver when they ring the door-bell, and with whom I could not be hired to go on a holiday trip. Some one has defined the best friend as one whom you would prefer to all others to have with you if wrecked on a desert island.

Surely such a definition has applied often and often to the Friend of Friends. Many a Christian has been happy in a lonely dungeon because his great Friend was with him. "Stone walls cannot a prison make," with such company.

I think young people are especially susceptible to this quality in another, though they may not analyze it. They instinctively draw away from

the man with little heart, however brilliant or polished. I know an evangelist, a very godly and able man, who loses half his power, especially with young people, because he seems stern and hard and inconsiderate of their sensibilities.

But with Jesus how different was it!—is it! He was a loved guest in the house of Mary and Martha, and only a loving guest is loved. He wept at Lazarus's grave. "Behold how He loved him," said the Jews. His human affection was, apparently, something astonishing. It excited remark. They were genuine tears of human affection that He shed at that open grave.

But real affection is not always shown or best shown in words or by violent emotions. Not tears on the face chiefly prove how we loved the dead, or flowers on their caskets, but kindly, considerate acts while they lived. In these signs of affection Jesus Christ was supreme. To understand this we must remember who He was and who His friends were. He was an uncrowned king among subjects who rarely understood Him, a God-man among rough, weak men; a leader with stupid, purblind followers,—yet how seldom He rebuked them, how often and how long He bore with them!

Peter even dared to contradict Him. He did not resent it. Peter refused to allow Him to wash his feet. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," was his impetuous assertion. But Jesus saw the

real love and respect which impelled the fiery disciple's words, and, instead of saying, "Very well, Mr. Hothead, I will go on to John," He said quietly, "Then thou hast no part with me," and at once Peter saw the deep significance of the act.

Peter the Rash must many a time have provoked Him to anger if He had been a mere man. Even the rebuke for the awful triple denial, the denial with oaths and curses, was not a bitter word but a look, a look of loving sadness. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter."

The other disciples would have tried Him scarcely less if His heart had not been more full of love than a mother's for her child. When Philip said, "Show us the Father, and that is enough," there seems to have been a note of deep disappointment mingling with tender love when Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"

When Thomas, the skeptic, would not believe it, though he had so many proofs of our Lord's resurrection,—proofs which had convinced all the others, He did not turn the hopeless and apparently willful doubter away with a rebuke for his crass, complacent skepticism, but simply said, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing."

When the disciples fell asleep in Gethsemane,

His only rebuke was the gentle words, "Could ye not watch one hour?" And when they fell asleep again, He did not say even that, but, considerate of their tired bodies and heavy eyelids, He only said, though He was in an agony worse than death, "Sleep on now and take your rest."

To go back further in His career, we see His love for the multitude in the provisions He miraculously supplied them when famished and far from food: His love for His tired disciples when He called them to come apart and rest when weary. Oh, how many instances we might quote, were it necessary, to prove this supreme quality of our Saviour's character.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear."

All our stupidity, all our blindness, all our willfulness, all our physical weakness. "He knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust."

We have seen in a previous chapter that considerateness for others is a part of true courage, it is the very essence of love.

We cannot too often call to mind who it was that showed this considerateness for His companions. An ordinary man might be induced to be considerate of another, remembering his own weaknesses. Yet a general does not easily put up with impatience, rudeness and stupidity in his

soldiers. No king would endure it from his subjects. But the King of kings bore it all because, —because He loved them so.

Go back still further in His career, and see the loving, considerate son in the household of Nazareth! He evidently had some foreglimpses of His divinity, though He may not fully have realized it, and yet it apparently never exalted Him in His thoughts above His peasant parents. The Son of God drawing water! The Son of God picking up sticks for the noonday fire! The Son of God shoving the plane, and shaping the yokes and goads for the oxen in the workshop of Nazareth, and doing it without a sign of condescending superiority!

Yes, from boyhood to manhood, to the Cross, He was the supremely Loving One, and He showed it by being the supremely Considerate One. Young men and women, study this story of the boy of Nazareth, of the Man of Galilee, until your hearts, too, beat with love for others, and your lives show it by considerate little deeds of kindness.

I do not believe, as some say, that you are attracted only by bold, rough, martial qualities. Some that write for you and about you have woefully misjudged you in this respect. If you do not always emulate, you at least appreciate the love manifested by gentle considerateness, by quiet self-sacrifice: the love that suffereth long

and is kind, the love that envieth not, the love that vaunteth not itself, that is not puffed up, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, the love that never faileth. St. Paul must have been looking in his Master's down-bent face when he wrote those words:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus!"

VII

His Unconventionality

THE conventional man has his place in the world. He preserves the traditions of the past: he is the common link between bygone days and the present: he conserves some things that are good, as well as some other things that are outworn and valueless. He is naturally a conservative, and has a restraining influence upon unwise radicalism and too sudden innovations. He usually agrees with Mrs. Grundy, and Mrs. Grundy is often right in the check she puts upon behaviour and speech.

Nevertheless, the conventional man is not apt to be a favourite with young people, because there is little of the natural, spontaneous, genuine, human element in him. He is hedged about by what others do and what others think, whether they are right or wrong.

The Pharisees of Christ's day were extreme types of the conventional man. Almost everything they did was done because somebody else had done the same thing before them. They were bound hand and foot by rules and regula-

tions and traditions. In the original Greek there is a touch of humour in Mark's description of one of their conventions, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews," he says, "except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the traditions of the elders: when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not: and many other things they have, which they have received to hold, as the washing of pots and cups and brazen vessels and tables."

The margin tells us that when Mark speaks of the Jews washing their hands, oft, the word he uses is, "with the fists," or "diligently," or perhaps it means, "up to the elbow." In other words,—the most thorough ablution of the hands, as a matter of ceremony whether they needed it or not, is the idea. And, moreover, not only their hands, but their "pint pots," as the words might be translated, and all their brass utensils, they are very particular about, whereas they were by no means so particular about their morals. They neglected their own parents and refused to provide for their support, on the specious plea that their property was already dedicated to God and they could not give it away. No more scathing rebuke of traditionalism gone to seed, or conventionalism run mad, than is found in this seventh chapter of Mark,—"Making the word of God of none effect through your traditions which ye have delivered."

It was to free men from just such letter-worship, just such conventionalism which strangled the spirit and made real religion void, that our Lord fought some of His most strenuous battles. "Hearken unto me, every one of you," He said, "and understand: there is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him, but the things that come out of a man, these are they which defile a man." And over against the washing of pint pots and brazen vessels and hands and arms clear up to the elbow, He sets forth the importance of cleansing the heart of evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness.

It is difficult for us in these modern days to realize how completely bound by traditions and conventions were the ruling classes in Christ's day. Some of their restrictions were so pitifully childish and ridiculous that we cannot read of them without an inward, pitying smile. Not only were eggs laid on the Sabbath forbidden, by some expounders of the law, but eggs laid on the day after the Sabbath were also tabooed in some quarters because the hen had prepared them on the Sabbath Day.

The very fact that such regulations seem supremely ridiculous to us is proof of the way in which Jesus Christ snapped the bonds of convention and broke through the artificial barriers

which bowed down men's souls and crushed them into man-made moulds.

So natural and almost inevitable seem the teachings and actions of Christ to us in these days that we cannot realize how He broke away from the traditionalism of the Pharisees. They preached in the synagogue: He preached in the open fields, or from the rocking boat on the lake-side. They occupied their time with expounding minute questions of the law, or writing abstruse commentaries on questions that were of no importance to any one: our Lord taught by stories and illustrations and parables. By the sparrow's fall He told them of God's care for His children; by the flowers of the field, of God's love of beauty; by the story of the bad boy who wandered off into a strange country, He told of God's forgiveness of the penitent sinner; by the story of the little piece of money that rolled off into the straw and litter of an Eastern hut, He told of the way in which God searches for His children; and again the lost sheep on the dark mountainside impresses the same lesson.

So far as I know, Christ never preached a sermon that the Pharisees would have thought worth listening to, and in talking among themselves they must have said, "Why, he is just a story-teller. Why should we pay any attention to a man who talks about seeds and birds and farmers and fishermen's nets and the clouds

in the sky, and has nothing to say about Hillel and the great expounders of the law?"

But not only in His teachings was our Lord most unconventional, but in His conduct as well. The Pharisees had so hedged about the Sabbath Day that it was impossible to render even acts of mercy and to perform the necessary duties of every-day life on the seventh day of the week. They were like mummies who had swathed themselves in their own bandages until they could move neither hand nor foot, on the day which ought to have been the best day of the week to them. It was no simple act of unconventional courage to burst these bandages and let the enswathed spirits go free.

This He did, not by disputing with the Pharisees, or by condemning the traditions of the elders, but simply by the common-sense, matter-of-fact statement that it was right to do good on the Sabbath Day and not evil. The Pharisees would have left the man with the withered hand helpless forever rather than heal him on the Sabbath Day. When Jesus said to him, "Stretch forth thine hand," and restored it whole like the other, He taught the world, once for all, by that mighty act of supreme, Godlike power, that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day, to save life, and not to kill.

Again, when the disciples, walking through the corn-field, or the wheat-field, as we would say,

plucked the ears of grain and rubbed them in their hands and ate them, He tremendously shocked the conventions of the day. They were breaking the Sabbath, these unconventional innovators. They were setting at naught the law of Moses. They were doing something almost worthy of death. But again Christ shattered these man-made bonds, which were not the bonds of Moses but of Moses' false interpreters, by that memorable word, " The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath."

But let it not be thought that because our Lord was an innovator, because He paid little attention to the conventions of the Pharisees, that He set aside one real law of God, or any divine convention of decency or purity or reverence implanted in the heart of man. He distinctly tells us that He came not to destroy but to fulfill. He simply unswathed the mummy, He simply broke the cords and unwound the cerements of centuries that the real spirit and purpose of God, whether written in the Bible or implanted in the heart of man, might become manifest.

I believe if the young people of the present generation study the life of Christ from this angle, with that idea of the times in which He lived, the narrow-minded traditionalism with which He had to contend, the prejudiced minds of His own disciples, even, they will see that only a Master-mind, only the Divine One, could thus

have stood out against the benumbing traditions and conventions of His time, and, in the end, win the day.

In the Chamber of Horrors at Nuremburg is a terrible image called the Iron Maiden. It is hollow within and studded with sharp iron spikes on the inside. The one who was to endure the supreme torture of the Inquisition was placed within this hollow iron maiden, and very, very gradually the doors through which he entered came together, though perhaps they were hours in closing upon their hapless victim. Little by little the spikes tore into his tender flesh until they met and he was crushed to death.

In some such "Iron Maiden" of tradition and convention were the Pharisees of old intellectually enclosed. The life of religion was being crushed out. The very spirit of God in the hearts of men was impaled on these cruel spikes of tradition, until Christ came, and opened the doors, and liberated the spirit, and true religion was once more freed from her prison-house.

VIII

His Ready Wit

WHAT a source of strength is a ready and nimble wit,—a wit that says the right thing at the right time! So many of us say and do the wrong thing at the right time, or the right thing at the wrong time, that it is a joy to discover One who never seems to have been at a loss for the right word or act at the right time.

I do not use the word wit in the lower and more trivial sense of the joker, the punster, or even of the one of sharp and pungent repartee. Wit is from an old root allied to knowledge, and that enigmatical Bible phrase of the authorized version, "I do you to wit," means simply, I would have you know.

The man of ready wit, then, is the man who has his knowledge at full command, who can bring his intellect to the front when needed.

One danger that besets the so-called witty man is that he will become sharp-tongued and ill-natured, that he will try to discomfit his opponent, rather than speak the words of truth, soberness and love. He will be so eager to make

his point that no considerations of truth or kindness will stand in the way.

It is needless to say that such a person would not be loved, and should not be followed by young people, and it is equally needless to say that our Lord and Master never tinged His retorts with malice or untruth. His answers, even to His enemies, were always the retorts courteous.

I can refer you to but four from many instances in His life, to prove how ready, how complete, how unanswerable, were His replies; how keenly His intellect always worked.

At one time the disciples came to Him with the old, selfish question which so often seemed to trouble them, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Whether it was a purely academic question that related to different classes of men, or whether they wanted Him to decide between them, Peter and James and John and the others, who should have the preëminence, I do not know.

What would your answer or mine have been to this question? Very likely we would have said, "That is a foolish question." "Wait and see." "The best man on earth will be the greatest there," or some other commonplace of the kind. The answer would have made little impression, and we should have lost our chance.

But what did Jesus do? He saw a little child playing near by, and said, "Come here, little

boy." His call must have been a winning one, I think, in a gentle voice and with a kindly smile, for without hesitation the little boy seems to have run to Him, and to have allowed Jesus to place him in the midst of those strange men while He said: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

I think the boy, too, must have been a gentle little fellow, just beginning to walk, perhaps, with no self-will, no fear, none of the shy self-consciousness that older children show—and he was the greatest because he was the humblest, and the least in his own estimation.

Here was taught a lesson, by the ready wit of that answer, that all the ages have heard and are only now beginning to fully understand: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Three other examples of this ready wit that says everything that can be said, and leaves no sting behind, are found in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew. Before His crucifixion the Jews seemed to be constantly trying to catch Jesus in His words, thinking perhaps that if they could thus discredit Him in the eyes of the people, resort to harsher methods would not be needed. The last thirty verses of the twenty-second chapter of Matthew are delightful examples of keen, sharp, but always kindly wit, pitted against malevolence and mere smartness.

The first question of the Pharisees, that "they might ensnare Him in His talk," was the old but ever burning question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?" Here was a trap indeed. If He should say, "Yes," the Jews would hate Him and He would lose His influence with His own people. If He should say, "No," the Romans would soon see that He made no more trouble for any one.

He said neither Yes nor No, but asked some one to bring Him a denarius, a silver coin worth about seventeen cents. "Whose image and name is this?" He said as He seemed to look at the coin curiously, examining the Emperor's face and inscription. They said, "Cæsar's." In that word they answered themselves. They were already rendering Cæsar tribute. They were using his coins, they were under his government, they were acknowledging his sovereignty. Why should they quibble about the taxes which were only an incident of the governmental authority they were under? "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Next the Sadducees took their turn and asked that foolish question about the much married widow, whom they summoned out of their imagination for the occasion. They did not believe in any resurrection, and they thought they had Him nicely trapped. Whatever He said, they thought, the impossibility of conscious life after

death, life like this life, with family relations, would be acknowledged.

But He swept away all their sophistries and silly quibbles and materialistic notions by saying: "You know neither your Bible nor the power of God. Heaven is not the same as earth. The angels of God are not married." Then He asserted the truth, which their quibble had tried to disprove, by referring them to their own Scriptures, in the third chapter of Exodus, where the Almighty said to Moses in the present tense, "I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," and added the self-evident assertion, "He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are living, is the inference, and there *is* a resurrection. His ready wit had silenced the Sadducees. They apparently said not another word.

Then the Pharisees took their turn again at heckling Him. "Which is the great commandment in the law?" asked their lawyer. I do not know just how they expected to catch Him with this question, but very likely thought they would involve Him with one or the other Pharisaic schools, who often insisted on the "mint, anise and cummin" of the law. Some ceremonial, some washing of the hands, some food prohibition, was exalted into the one important "Thou shalt not," or "Thou shalt."

How our Lord swept all those quibbles away

with the one magnificent statement of duty to God and man which embraced every other commandment! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second, like unto it, is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets."

Read over these answers to the Jewish quibblers once more. If they do not contain the very pith and essence of exalted thought and a ready command of wit, I do not know what language means. Every answer, though thrown off on the spur of the moment, has become a classic. Every one of them has been quoted ten times ten thousand times since. No wonder we read, "No one was able to answer Him a word."

Such is the One I ask you to follow, young people. No intellectual weakling. No "Ethelbert the Unready" as one of the ancient kings was called. No man who could be fooled by sophistries, but One keen, quick, alert, resourceful, even on the lowest plane of intellect, and yet One so gentle and simple that He could rebuke arrogance and self-assertion by pointing to a little child.

To Him I ask you to yield your intellect, as well as your hearts.

IX

His Good Cheer

SURELY no character is complete in which the element of good cheer is wanting. A doleful whiner could never commend himself or his cause to young people or old people either. The good cheer of Jesus I have no hesitation in saying was one of His notable characteristics.

Some people have speculated, most unwisely and unnecessarily, as to whether He ever smiled or not. Did He smile? Of course He did, and laughed outright, I have no doubt. How otherwise can we account for His attractiveness to all kinds of people?

Children do not go to a smileless, austere man, but they ran to Jesus. The gloomy face that never relaxes does not win people, but Jesus won all sorts and conditions of men.

It may be thought that He would be so oppressed with the sins and sorrows of mankind that He could not smile or laugh. But remember that He also knew more of the love and presence of God, His Father, and was more sure of the final triumph of goodness than any man who

ever lived. Therefore He had more and better reasons for good cheer than any other.

However, we are not left to our speculations to prove His good cheer. We have His own words for it. These two words "good cheer" were often on His lips.

Dr. Alexander McLaren has pointed out the fact that, while our Lord often used the expression, "good cheer," it is only once employed in the Gospels by any other than He. We may well believe that of all the men and women about Jesus He was the most cheerful and most often exhorted others to this virtue.

Let us think of some of these occasions. A paralyzed man, lying on a mattress, was brought to Him once by the sick man's friends. What does He say to the man? "Rise up and walk"? Not at first. But, "Be of *good cheer*." And why? "Because you are well again"? No, he was not healed yet. But, "Be of good cheer because thy sins are forgiven thee." The healing came afterwards, but the cause of his good cheer was forgiven sin. Christ never told people to be glad without giving them some great reason for their gladness.

How feeble and futile are many of our exhortations. "Come, come, cheer up, cheer up," we say to the down-hearted, despondent man. "Why should I cheer up," he might well ask, "if you give me no reason for cheerfulness?

You might as well talk to the wind as to try to disperse my melancholy gloom with mere words."

But go to the root of matters. You cannot say to your friend as Christ did, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but you can say, "Cheer up because God lives and loves you. Cheer up, because He is very near you and will bear your burden."

You may not be able to convince him of this fact, but at least you have given him some ground for good cheer, and have not merely afflicted him with a senseless babble that contrasts your good spirits with his gloom.

Again, when the woman with the issue of blood came, and with full faith that she would be healed, pathetically touched the hem of His garment, His first word to her was, "Daughter, be of *good cheer*." Why, again? Not that she was healed, merely, but that her *faith* was confirmed by her healing. "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Christ never tells us to be joyful unless there is some great reason for joy and some reason other than mere physical welfare.

You will easily recall another use of these words. I cannot do better than to quote the graphic description of a great author who writes, "You remember the scene,—our Lord alone on the mountain in prayer, the darkness coming

down upon the little boat, the storm rising as the darkness fell, the wind howling down the gorges of the mountains round the land-locked lake, the crew toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary! And then, all at once, out of the mysterious obscurity beneath the shadows of the hill, Something is seen moving. It comes nearer: and the waves become solid beneath that light and noiseless foot, as steadily He comes. Jesus Christ uses the billows as the pavement on which He approaches His servants, and the storms which beat on us are His occasion for drawing very near.

"Then they think Him a spirit. They cry out with a shriek of terror—because Jesus Christ is coming to them in so strange a fashion! . . . When He comes it is with the old word on His lips, 'Be of good cheer.'

"Tell us not to be frightened when we see something stalking across the waves in the darkness! 'It is I.' Surely that is enough. The Companion in the storm is the Calmer of the terror. He who recognizes Jesus Christ as drawing near to his heart over wild billows may well 'be of good cheer' since the storm but brings his truest treasure to him."

Again in the sixteenth chapter of John we read how our Lord at the very end of His earthly life, when He had told His disciples about His death, and had predicted their cow-

ardly flight and desertion of Him, ends His talk with these gracious words: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but *be of good cheer.* I have overcome the world."

There is the exhortation and the reason for it. "I have overcome the world," and, "trusting in me for strength," He seems to say, "you, too, can overcome."

Once more He uses these glad, good words when, no longer on the earth, but speaking from the heavens, He said to Paul in the castle prison of Cæsarea, when the apostle was in danger of being "torn in pieces" by the infuriated Jews, "Be of *good cheer*, for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Oh, I am glad this word is recorded, for it shows us that He who said, while on earth, "Be of good cheer," speaks the same language from the heavens.

And how often and often, yes, millions of times, has He uttered them since, to souls in trouble, to sorrowing ones, to the sick, to the shut-in, to the one who has lost all his worldly goods, "Be of good cheer, for I still live. All is not lost. With me you have all things."

This became a favourite word of St. Paul's, for in the great shipwreck off the coast of Malta, "when all hope that we should be saved was now taken away," he exhorted the crew to be

of "*good cheer*," and again in the next verse but two, "Wherefore, sirs, be of *good cheer*." His exhortation was effective, for we read even before the ship struck the reef and broke up, they followed his example and took food and "were all of *good cheer*."

The apostle's words were no empty exhortation, but founded on the message of deliverance he had from the angel of God "whose I am and whom I serve."

Young friends, if you are Christians, you can always have a message of good cheer for others. Yours is a "good cheer" religion, for you have a "good cheer" Saviour. You can always say, "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world." Better than that, you can always say, "God is not only in the heavens. He is on the earth. He is

> "'Closer to you than breathing,
> Nearer than hands and feet.'"

It was the consciousness of this Presence that made Jesus glad in obscurity, in poverty, when hated, when misunderstood, when deserted, when mocked, when scourged, when killed. He offers you the same source of joy that was His, for He was and is the Lord of Good Cheer.

X

His Tactfulness

HOW many well-intentioned people injure if they do not ruin their influence by lack of tact! A tactless word, an ill-considered act, may cover and hide a multitude of good deeds, as charity is said to cover a multitude of sins.

> "Evil is wrought by lack of thought,
> As well as by lack of heart."

A rough, bear's-hide exterior is no sign of a kindly spirit, though it sometimes goes with it. A blundering callousness to the proprieties or to the feelings of others is no indication of real strength, though it sometimes is mistaken for it. A bull in a china-shop breaks only dishes, and is turned out as soon as possible.

Tactlessness is not a fault of youth so much as of maturity. When a man grows strong in his own estimation, and independent of the opinions of others, he is apt to develop a brutal tactlessness. His children cannot reply to him. His wife does not dare to dispute him. His neighbours do not wish to be browbeaten, and, to

escape anything that may lead to an argument, avoid him, and he becomes shunned and disliked.

Perhaps such a man should be characterized by some harsher word than "tactless," but it springs often from the same root as the trouble of the blunderer,—a lack of fine sensibility concerning the rights and feelings of others.

Still other people are tactless because of an overweening conceit and egoism. A gentleman of my acquaintance can rarely talk of anything but himself, his successes, his oratory, his philanthropies, his last speech, and how it captured his audience, and he is blissfully ignorant that he is not the most interesting topic of conversation to all his acquaintances.

A tactless type of man in fiction is Mr. Gradgrind, who is always so absolutely sure that he is right and that there is nothing in the world worth considering but facts, that he dismisses the opinions of every one else with a wave of the hand,—puts them out of existence, as it were, with a gesture.

There is a malicious element in the tactlessness of some. Such a one prides himself on telling the brutal truth, "frankly and flatly," no matter where it cuts or whom it hurts. He takes pleasure in seeing his helpless victims writhe under words true, perhaps, but unkind.

So we see that tactlessness shades off into various kinds of heartlessness, though it may often

be simple blundering carelessness, like the alleged conversation:

"Who is that man with the face of a baboon?"

"That is my twin brother."

"Pray forgive me. How stupid of me not to realize it!"

We have all had occasion, perhaps, to grow hot and cold by turns as we have remembered some tactless remark, or act, of our own, but perhaps we have never thought of cultivating tactfulness as a Christian virtue. At any rate, it is a virtue which Christ exhibited on many occasions.

I have already alluded to His conversation with the woman of Samaria. Was there ever a finer example of marvellous tactfulness? It would have been so easy to put her in an antagonistic mood, and to have lost the chance of teaching her and the world an immortal truth.

It was a tactful thing, in the first place, to ask a favour of her. "Give me to drink." It often requires more genuine grace to ask and receive a favour than to grant one. Pride can give a boon, a humble spirit only asks one.

It took still more tact to receive graciously and gently the woman's rather grudging question, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" One of less patience and tactfulness would have answered, "It is a pity if you cannot give a

thirsty man a drink without raising questions about his nationality." Instead of this, our Lord suggested that there was other water than that which lay at the bottom of Jacob's well.

But that idea at first could not get through her dense, materialistic mind. "Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep. . . . Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" A thirsty man might well have been pardoned for losing his patience at this, and saying, "My good woman, stop these quibbling questions and give me a drink." Christ, however, putting aside His thirst and any natural impatience, only led her on another step to ask for this living water.

We do not even know that He got the drink of water at all, for at the end of the conversation we are told the woman left her water pot (apparently in her interest and excitement she forgot what she came for), and "went her way into the city," to tell her friends and neighbours of this wonderful stranger.

But before she left Him, our Lord again showed His tactfulness by not accusing her at first of her loose life, but by saying, "Go, call thy husband," which led her to accuse herself by saying, "I have no husband," though she knew full well that she had had five husbands.

All this conversation led up to the revelation of Himself as the Messiah; "I that speak unto thee am He,"—a revelation she could not have

understood without the tactful conversation that led up to it.

I am not sure that it is always or generally wise or best to plump the question at a stranger, "Will you become a Christian?" Though there is far more danger of not asking this question at all than of asking it in the wrong way, it is still better to lead up to it tactfully and naturally, as our Lord led up to the announcement of His Messiahship to the woman of Samaria.

One more example from many is sufficient to prove the tactfulness of Jesus Christ. This time, too, He showed it in dealing with a sinful woman,—the woman taken in adultery. It was a clear case. The law was plain, and her guilt apparently was unquestionable. Three courses were open to the Master. He might have sided promptly with her accusers and said, "Let the law take its course. She is a bad woman. I can have nothing to do with her." Alas! most of us would have been among her judges, I fear. But this course would not have led her to "sin no more." It would have undoubtedly confirmed her in her abandoned life.

He might, again, have avoided the Pharisees' trap, for it doubtless was a trap, by saying, "This is no concern of mine. I have more important business than to settle this case." This answer, though relieving Him of any responsibility for judgment for or against her, would have taught

no lesson, would have pricked no conscience, and might have led the woman to think that He made light of the sin.

He took neither of these courses, but stooped down and wrote on the ground. Probably this was done to make His remark the more emphatic and impressive. At last they were all still. The clamour against the poor woman was hushed for a moment. Then He lifted His eyes, and, in the quiet following that unexpected act, He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

This gave the woman's accusers a chance to retreat. They would scarcely have gone had He been looking at them. Their pride would have compelled them to brazen it out. But with no eye upon them, and only their consciences accusing them, "they went out one by one," the youngest following the example of the eldest.

When He looked up again, only the woman was there. She and Jesus alone. With His pure eyes upon her, His gentle voice forgiving her the sin of which we may believe she had repented, we can also well believe that she obeyed His word of dismissal, "Go and sin no more."

With what consummate tactfulness this was all managed! The scribes and Pharisees did not achieve their triumph, or find their longed-for chance to accuse Him. The woman was not

hardened in sin by harshness, or made to think lightly of it by His indifference. Christ avoided the Pharisees' trap, who thought to accuse Him of disobedience to Moses' law, and He avoided sending the woman at the same time to lower depths of misery. The weapons which His adversaries launched at Him came back, like the Australian's boomerang, on their own heads.

The emphasis on our Lord's great heart of love sometimes obscures in our minds His real claim to the highest and keenest intelligence. He who fully understands this incident in His life can never doubt either.

XI

His Uncomplaining Fortitude

THE complaining whiner is of all men most disagreeable to the optimism and courage of young people. They give him a wide berth. Their hero is the man who does his work and makes no fuss about it, who does heroic deeds and never poses as a hero, who wins the Carnegie Medal and hides it under his coat lapel, who never shows his scars or boasts of his crutches.

A not uncommon character, met with in every-day life, is the self-pitying man or woman. Their woes are more woeful, their troubles more troublesome, their griefs more grievous, than those of others. Was it Dickens' Mrs. Gummidge whose refrain was always, "I feels it more than others"?

A woman once said to me, "I suppose I have suffered more than any woman who ever lived." What a sublime height of self-pity! The sufferings of the martyrs and confessors, of the Mother of our Lord, of Joan of Arc, of Charlotte Corday, all paled in importance before her exaggerated notions of her own aches and pains.

Many of us are inclined to think when suffering

any mental or bodily anguish that we are "of all men most miserable." But we soon realize, when again we come to a normal state of mind and body, that nothing has happened to us but that which is common to man. The difficult thing to do is to keep from pitying ourselves and complaining of our lot when nervous and worn and overburdened with many cares.

The truly heroic soul will be strong and uncomplaining when things go wrong, when mind and body are out of tune, when friends desert and foes are strong.

Let us see if our great Master measures up to this standard of heroism.

He lived thirty years in the obscurity of a little village of no savoury reputation. He must have had from His boyhood glimpses at least of His great mission, possibly a full understanding of it. Yet He never seems to have chafed or fretted over the long delays of His active ministry. How many people eat their hearts out in their desire to get into some conspicuous work, for some "place in the sun." Many a young minister frets about his little parish, his small congregations, his few opportunities to influence the world, forgetting that He who of all men came to minister to the whole world was thirty years old before He preached His first sermon or did His first public work.

Many a young doctor curses the long, long

years of struggle, before he gets his first great case, or a paying clientele.

But Nazareth was not only an obscure, it was a most unresponsive place. Jesus could hardly be set down in a spot that would be so slow to recognize His claims. Even when He became famous and had performed many miracles, He was "a prophet without honour in His own country" and the Nazarenes rose and dragged Him out to the brow of the steep hill to cast Him over.

But we never hear any complaints of His hard or obscure lot, nor are any anathemas of Nazareth recorded, though it richly deserved them.

One of the hardest things for a man of genius to bear must be the misunderstandings or indifference of his nearest relatives. But this cross, too, Jesus had to bear. "Neither did His brethren believe on Him." But He bore this unbelief, which perhaps ripened into hostility, without complaint, until at last James, and doubtless others of His brethren, became His loyal disciples.

His extreme poverty and His homelessness must have been another hard portion of His earthly lot. Yet we hear no self-pitying complaint. The one recorded allusion to it, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," seems rather a poetic statement of

fact, untinged with self-pity. Certainly there is no whining or whimpering about it, or berating of His hard lot.

The stupidity and the inconstancy of His friends and disciples was another bitter drop in His cup. I think there is scarcely anything more exasperating to a high-strung, sensitive man than to be constantly misunderstood or half understood. But our Lord was constantly subject to this annoyance. We have seen, in other chapters, how frequently Peter and Thomas and John absolutely, almost ludicrously, failed to catch His meaning, or understand His mission. An ordinary man would frequently have broken out in exasperated rebukes of their crass stupidity. We hear nothing of the sort from Jesus' lips, but only courteous, gentle rejoinders. Once indeed He broke out with the exclamation concerning the unbelievers, "Oh, foolish ones and slow of heart," but it was not the expression of any personal pique, but of wonder at their not believing what the *prophets* had written.

And when the end came and His enemies had poured out the full vials of their wrath on His devoted head, there was no querulous denunciation, no upbraiding them for their barbarous cruelty, but only the godlike word of pity, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To my mind, such self-control, such gentle,

uncomplaining heroism, speaks as loudly of His divinity as do His miracles.

I have a friend who has been for nearly twenty years partially paralyzed. Little by little the dread disease has been creeping up to his brain, leaving that clear and active to the last. His feet, his hands, his back, his tongue, one after the other has yielded to the benumbing palsy. But I have never heard a word of complaint from him, or his devoted wife, who has waited on him most untiringly during all these years. At last her turn came, and an accident sent her to the hospital, where she lost a foot, and can now only hobble around on crutches as she cares for him. He was a brilliant, beloved and successful pastor, a leader in his denomination. Yet with all these bright prospects overclouded, and all these hopes shattered, and all this suffering to endure, his is one of the happiest homes I know. The last word I heard from the wife, for my friend cannot now speak, was, "Oh, we do have good times in this house. We were never happier."

From such a bedside I come away with a greater sense that I have seen a hero than if I had seen him win a battle or save a thousand lives from a burning building, it is so uncomplaining, so unconscious, so unadvertised, the very essence of heroism.

Such is the lesson our Lord teaches concern-

ing the love which "suffereth long and is still kind," the love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Such is the uncomplaining fortitude of our Master Christ.

XII

His Steadfastness

A MAN without steadfastness of purpose never impressed himself upon the world. A spineless, angleworm character that wriggles its way through the world, turned aside by every obstacle, never arriving at its destination except by indirection or by chance, never inspires eager and heroic youth.

No writer ever penned a truer word than the Apostle James when he wrote, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

The "stand-patter" has come to have an evil significance in political slang, at least in some quarters, but yet a man who does not "stand pat" for his convictions is not worth much either in politics or religion. He only becomes obnoxious when he shuts his eyes to progress and his heart to conviction and for selfish or unworthy reasons refuses to change.

"Consistency is the last refuge of the stupid," is a proverb which in various forms contains a certain amount of truth. But it is equally true that inconsistency is the first refuge of the weak.

Steadfastness lies very near the root of all Christian virtues.

When one becomes a Christian what does he do? He does not say, "I will try the experiment of serving Christ." "I will see how I like becoming His disciple for a month, and if I like it I may keep on."

The Master never accepts any such conditional allegiance. To be a Christian is to decide once and for all that Christ shall be crowned King of our lives through time and eternity.

As the Christian Endeavour pledge puts it, "I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do, and *throughout my whole life* I will endeavour to lead a Christian life." How weak and paltry it would be should it read, "I will try to be a Christian for the next ten days," or "while I feel like it I will count myself on Christ's side."

And yet that last is the pledge that many so-called Christians practically make. While the revival lasts, while emotion is hot, in other words, while they feel like it, they are on the right side, but our Lord described them exactly in the exquisite parable of the sower and the seed, for the seed of truth in their hearts was sown where there was not much deepness of earth, and when the sun arose with a burning heat, the little sprouts of good intention withered away. In other words, they had "no steadfastness of purpose."

In every relation of life steadfastness is fundamental. What is a friend worth who is not steadfast in his friendship? What is marriage worth if it is not an inviolable contract? One of the crying evils of our day is divorce, which simply means unstable love and lack of steadfastness to the promises of the marriage altar. What is a treaty between nations if it is to be torn up, as it often has been, on the plea of necessity or mere convenience?

No, a very foundation stone of business, religion, politics, family life and national life is steadfastness.

Now consider, for a little, how our Lord Jesus Christ illustrated this great virtue in His very first recorded utterance. "I must be about my Father's business." Even then the twelve-year-old Jesus had glimpses of His life-work which He never lost until He hung upon Calvary's cross.

Over and over He repeated the same thought, "I must work the works of God while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work." Never, until He cried with His last expiring breath, "It is finished," did He change His purpose or His view of His life-work.

Suppose for a moment the almost impossible supposition that He had at length forgotten His purpose, or lost His enthusiasm for it. Suppose that opposition had discouraged Him or the

cross had frightened Him! Suppose the Devil had got the better of the contest on the mount of Temptation,—what would have been the consequences to mankind? A Saviourless world, unredeemed humanity, a devil-ruled earth. All that we are or hope to be depended upon our Saviour's standing "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Think again how steadfast He was in His friendships. Peter and James and John He chose at the beginning of His public ministry. Peter and James and John were with Him at Golgotha, standing afar off, perhaps, but not because of His coldness but of their own fears.

It must have taken a wonderfully steadfast friendship to bind such unstable creatures to Him with hooks of steel. But even Peter, the most inconstant and mercurial of all, could not long remain out of the circle of His compelling, steadfast love.

So it was with all the twelve, apparently, with the one sad exception of the traitor whose greed even Christ's unmeasured love could not hold fast.

And think for a moment of the way in which love for the Master has inspired steadfast devotion in His disciples during all the centuries since. The timid hares before the resurrection became the bold lions immediately afterwards. We read no more of a vacillating Peter, of a self-

seeking John, but, so far as we know, every one of the disciples remained true to the end.

James, the first martyr among them, according to the tradition: Peter, asking to be crucified with his head downwards that he might suffer an even more dishonourable death than his Master: John, lingering to extreme old age and looking across the waves from his island prison in Patmos to his beloved seven churches in Asia,—all tell us that something of their Master's heroic steadfastness had entered their lives.

And how many, many millions have His life and love and example since inspired with the same unshakeable devotion! In a tomb on the heights of the great city of Smyrna are reputed to lie the bones of Polycarp, one of the earliest Christian martyrs. His last memorable words which have echoed down the centuries were uttered when he was about to be beheaded and was asked to recant: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has never done me wrong: How can I deny Him now?"

And these words have in substance been echoed by countless martyrs from that early century down to the day when in the Boxer uprising in 1900 scores of missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians gave their lives for their faith.

In an ancient seacoast town of France called Aigues Mortes is a great stone tower, called the

"Tower of Constance." In this tower were imprisoned many Huguenot Protestants after the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Among them was a young girl imprisoned when about twelve years old, because her brother was a Protestant pastor. For thirty-four long years she was immured in this stone dungeon, but she would not renounce her faith. While there she scratched with her needle in the stone floor the one French word, "Resistez," resist. That word for two hundred years has inspired other Christians, and, as with a large company of fellow Endeavourers I once gathered around that stone, I thanked God as never before that there was a power in this world that could inspire steadfastness to the truth, unconquerable and deathless. That power is the religion of Jesus Christ our Lord, the exemplar of divine steadfastness.

XIII

His High Idealism

I CANNOT imagine a healthy-minded young person, who has been brought up amid decent surroundings, who is not moved by high ideals. It is true that these ideals may be dimmed, and bad companions and drink and cigarettes and selfishness may work havoc with them before one has left his teens, but the normal young person, though he may not say much about it, has his ideals and is only moved and influenced for good by those who set up a high standard of life and of relationship to one's fellows.

I venture to say that Christ our Lord could not appeal to the young people of this generation or any other as He certainly does appeal to them, had His ideals been less lofty than they are.

It is true that we may not always understand them: we may feel that they are impossible of realization, but to set them before us as our goal to be admired and striven for, even if we do not reach it, is absolutely essential to the leadership of a religious teacher.

To understand the high idealism of our Master, it is only necessary to study carefully the fifth chapter of Matthew and the sixth chapter of Luke. Here the Beatitudes are recorded, and during all the nineteen centuries since they were spoken no higher standard of human action has ever been set up. Indeed, so far is mankind from reaching the standard of the Beatitudes that they are still considered by the great majority of men as impracticable, if not impossible of achievement.

Think for a moment of the people who are called the "blessed" ones:—the "poor in spirit" are blessed; those who are not self-assertive and pushing and conceited, but who are ready to yield their wills to God.

Those who "mourn" are blessed, the ones whom we are inclined to think are of all men most miserable, but if they mourn for their sins we are told that they are the ones that "shall be comforted."

The "meek," too, are blessed, but meekness is almost a term of reproach in these days. Yet Christ dared to say that they shall "inherit the earth." Not those who return blow for blow, who demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but those who turn the other cheek, those who bless them that curse, those who pray for the ones who abuse them,—these are the ones whom our Lord pronounces blessed.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," He again says, and yet after all these centuries the nations have come so far short of His high ideals that the bloodiest war of all times is being waged as these words are written.

I need not recite all the rest of the Beatitudes: they are all on the same high level. I would urge my readers to peruse them again and again, until something of the wonderful standards of human conduct which they have set up are comprehended and made ours.

But, you say, what is the use of having such ideals for mankind if we can never attain them? If, after nearly two thousand years, we are as far away as ever? Would it not be better to have lower ideals, which there is some possibility of attaining? This is indeed false and pernicious reasoning. We can see from the study of history how lower ideals have affected mankind. Mohammed and his followers have their ideals. Some of them are noble, like their standards of total abstinence and their ideas of fasting and their calls to prayer. But after all, these are not the highest ideals, and, when placed beside the Sermon on the Mount they look incomplete indeed, especially when they are offset by the ideals of conquest and the sensuous Paradise which Mohammed placed before his followers.

Buddha had his ideals, and his followers have sought to realize them,—ideals of calmness and

of indifference to worldly concerns, callousness to hope and fear and grief. But how low and poor their ideals seem when placed beside the Sermon on the Mount.

The great ideals of Confucius are worthy of consideration, for they include reverence and respect for the aged, honour for parents and ancestors, all of them noble in their way, but how restricted and poverty-stricken they seem compared with the larger and vastly higher ideals of our Lord, which include all that is good in these other religions, and vastly more!

The ideals of Mohammed and of Buddha and of Confucius have set their seal upon vast portions of the human race. They have made Turkey and Arabia what they are, and the Orient what it is to-day. If there is anything good in western civilization, if the Occident is superior in any way to the Orient, as we believe it is, it is because Christ's ideals have influenced the one and not the other.

And yet, however largely they have influenced the Christian world, it is again necessary to remind ourselves how far short this world has come of realizing them. We have seen them from afar, but we have not yet even approached them. Yet however slight our attempts have been, and however far away from the goal we are, how much these ideals have done for this world of ours! They have abolished the slave

trade and slavery. They have prohibited duelling. They have set their seal of disapproval upon suicide and war. They have discouraged intemperance and lust. They have encouraged democracy and good-will, and they have set up the beautiful standards of the Golden Rule to which the Christian nations are steadily approaching, though with many stumblings and much groping in the dark;—the standard which eventually will lead all men, as we hope and believe, to do unto others as they would be done by.

Young people, in your sober and honest moments, would you have any other or lower ideals than those which are recorded in these two great chapters of the New Testament? However they rebuke your failures, however far you fall below them, however mightily they tower above you, would you acknowledge any Lord or Master who set before you any lower goals and ideals than those which the life and teachings of *our* Lord and Master have established for all mankind?

XIV

What Think Ye of Christ?

WE have been considering in thirteen different chapters the appeal which the Master makes to the young people of this and every generation, or perhaps I should say the characteristics of youth which appreciate and recognize their full fruition in Christ. We have found that He was the most natural of men and that unspoiled young people are always attracted by genuine naturalness and are repelled by artificial words and manners.

We have seen the supreme modesty of Christ, His courage and His generous affection, and all these qualities are characteristics of the best youth. We find from His words and His actions that He was most unconventional and approachable, while at the same time His tactfulness and ready wit foiled the machinations of His enemies. He was of all men the most steadfast, uncomplaining and cheerful, and His ideals were so high that the world has not yet caught up with them.

All these characteristics naturally and inevitably would appeal to any genuine and unspoiled

young person who really understood them. Christ would be his hero, Christ his exemplar, Christ the embodiment of all his ideals. It remains only for us to consider, and that briefly, what this man with the heart of youth said of Himself, and what claims He made to the allegiance of all, young and old alike.

After all that we have learned of His modesty and His naturalness, a man among men, a peasant among peasants, an obedient son, a friend who put on no superior airs,—it is almost startling to hear the claims that He makes for Himself. If His life had shown Him to be arrogant, conceited, and afflicted with megalomania, we might not be surprised to hear Him say, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." No greater pretensions were ever made by any man; no such self-assertion was ever dreamed of by any mere man outside of a lunatic asylum; no conqueror of the world ever dared to say of God, "I and my Father are one."

Perhaps some of my readers may remind me that in another place our Lord says, "My Father is greater than I." But the seeming contradiction is only another proof of His self-assertion. Think of Alexander the Great, or Napoleon, or Kaiser Wilhelm, saying in all seriousness, "God is greater than I am." Such a statement would either show that the man was out of his head, or

it would be such a colossal piece of egotism that no world conqueror would have ever dared to utter it.

But it was the meek and lowly Jesus that said this, the modest friend of publicans and sinners, the Carpenter of Nazareth. We can understand these two seeming contradictions when we remember the relation of father and son. The father and son in the ideal family are one,—one in sympathy, one in purpose, one in deepest affection, while in a sense the father, simply because he is father, is greater than the son. Our Lord does not stop to explain His words in this case. Indeed, He seldom does, but His assertion that God the Father is greater than God the Son is, by implication, as strong a statement of His unique divinity as could possibly be made.

Again He says, "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." That, to be sure, is a modest statement compared with the words we have just quoted, but even that would be a statement that few kings in their royal purple, few conquerors at the head of victorious armies, would dare to make,—that they were greater than Israel's greatest and richest and wisest king. But Christ our Lord said that, and the world has never questioned or doubted the statement.

Again He says, " Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God, but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." What mere man, outside of Bedlam, ever dared to say such things of himself? The height of human self-conceit could not reach such a pitch, and if it did, the man who uttered it would be overwhelmed with the laughter and the derision of the world.

Recall for an instant the parable of the man who built his house upon the sand. Who does Christ say that he is? Why, he is the man who hears Christ's sayings or reads them, and does not follow them. His house shall be destroyed. While the man who hears and obeys is the man who has built his house upon the rock which the rains and the winds cannot destroy. His sayings, then, are the *foundation rock* for all men, the rock on which they should build their characters, and erect the whole superstructure of their lives.

If He was only a man who said these words, what egregious self-assertion would they indicate! The wisest philosopher that the world ever knew, the greatest author whose words future generations will never willingly let die, never dared to utter such a sentiment, or thus speak of " these sayings of mine."

Such words would sound puerile and foolish in

the mouth of a Homer, or Shakespeare, or Milton, but the world has accepted this parable at its face value. It has acknowledged that the one who uttered it had the right to say these things. It has seen nothing conceited or out of character in these utterances.

I might quote such statements as these almost indefinitely. Side by side with the examples of the utmost modesty and humility we find these strange self-assertions, strange indeed if He who uttered them was only a man. And yet that Christ made these statements has never been seriously denied. No higher critic has read them out of the Bible. No advanced theologian has claimed that He did not say these things. Nor has the severest critic ever been unwilling to admit the essential modesty, humility and gentleness of the man Christ.

How can we account then for these assertions of His, when we consider them in the light of His life? It is no new argument, but it is a convincing one,—the argument which I have never seen refuted, that we are shut up to one of two propositions; either Christ was what He claimed to be, the unique Son of God, one with the Father, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Vine of which we are the branches, the greater than Solomon, the foundation rock of human character, or else He was the most conceited, immodest and bombastic of mankind. Human na-

ture revolts at the second alternative. It has never been seriously held by any considerable number of people. Even Christ's avowed enemies have shrunk from any such statement as they read the story of His life and death.

What then can the ingenuous and fair-minded young person say who has followed us in these different chapters? and who has felt the appealing touch of Christ's life and words,—what can he say except to repeat the cry of the once doubting, but finally convinced, Thomas,—

"My Lord and my God!"

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